

how best to make sure that needed changes occur. As an example of this I want to highlight the efforts of anesthesiologists, who accomplished a nearly sevenfold reduction in anesthesia-related errors through cooperative changes to their systems and practices. Not surprisingly, when anesthesia-related errors decreased, so did insurance premiums. This should be our model of how to effectively address medical malpractice. If we work together, between needed reforms in the insurance industry, and by supporting medical professionals in improving the critical work they do, I know we can tackle this problem effectively.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Massachusetts is recognized.

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, first of all, I thank my colleague and friend from Vermont for his excellent statement and comments. I look forward to joining with him on the debate of that issue when we have a chance on Monday and Tuesday next. I share the disappointment of the Senator from Vermont that we will not have an opportunity to address the stem cell issue on the floor of the Senate, which can offer such extraordinary hope to so many families in this country.

We are in the life science century. We have seen this enormous progress that has been made with the mapping of the human genome, with imaging, nanotechnology—breathtaking advances—and stem cell research offers a very similar kind of opportunity. We have legislation that is on the calendar that was approved in a bipartisan way in the House of Representatives, and it has been on the calendar now for about a year. I think most of us were heartened when we heard our majority leader indicate his general support—a change in position—his general support for the items which are in the House bill that is on the calendar now before the Senate. Evidently, though, we will not have an opportunity next week to consider that stem cell bill.

When I think of the stem cell legislation, I think of the possibilities of hope for families who are facing Alzheimer's disease or cancer, Parkinson's disease, diabetes because the possibilities in research are virtually unlimited. There are no assurances of the outcome, no absolute assurance that we are going to come up with cures, but for those who are on the cutting edge of basic and applied research in the science area or in the health area believe that this stem cell research offers enormous possibilities. I wish that had been included in the agenda for next week's discussion about health care, but it has not been.

HATE CRIMES

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I share the disappointment of many that the Republican leadership has delayed calling up the sex offender registration bill. The House passed its version last

September and the Senate Judiciary Committee reported a much improved version to the full Senate last October.

When the House passed its bill, it approved an amendment to improve the Federal hate crimes laws as well. The Senate bill does not include that provision, but many of us had hoped to add it as an amendment. I urge my colleagues to support it.

The inclusion of the Federal hate crimes law is not inconsistent with the goals of the legislation to stop crimes against children. We can clearly do more to protect our communities and encourage them to do so. Hate crimes are a violation of everything our country stands for. These are crimes against entire communities, against the whole Nation, and against the fundamental ideals on which America was founded, and they have a major impact on children. The vast majority of Congress agrees.

Last year, Senator SMITH and I offered our hate crimes bill as an amendment to the Defense Authorization Act, and it passed by a bipartisan vote of 65 to 33. The House passed a nearly identical hate crimes amendment by a vote of 223 to 199, which made it part of its sex offender registration bill. The substantial majority of both Houses of Congress have now voted in favor of the hate crimes proposal, and the time is long overdue to pass these protections into law.

The hate crimes bill is supported by a broad coalition. Over 200 law enforcement and civil rights groups, including the National District Attorneys Association, the National Sheriff's Association, and the National Association of Chiefs of Police, the Anti-Defamation League, and the U.S. Council of Mayors.

A strong Federal role in prosecuting hate crimes is essential for both practical and symbolic reasons. In practical terms, the bill will have a real world impact on the actual criminal investigations and prosecution. The symbolic value of the bill is equally important. Hate crimes target whole communities, not just individuals. Attacking people because they are gay, African American, Arab or Muslim or Jewish, or any other criteria is bigotry at its worst. We must say loudly and clearly to those inclined to commit them that they will go to prison if they do.

The vast majority of us in Congress recognize the importance of passing a hate crimes bill. This year we can make the statement even clearer by turning it into law.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST— S. 1086

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that at a time to be determined by the majority leader, following consultation with the Democratic leader, but no later than May 25, 2006, the Senate proceed to the consideration of Calendar No. 251, S. 1086, and that it be considered under the following limitations:

That there be 1 hour of debate on the bill, with the time equally divided and controlled by the two leaders or their designees; the only amendment in order, other than the committee-reported substitute amendment, be a Kennedy-Smith hate crimes amendment on which there will be 2 hours of debate with the time equally divided and controlled in the usual form; that upon the use or yielding back of time on the amendment, without further intervening action or debate, the Senate proceed to vote in relation to the amendment; that upon disposition of the Kennedy-Smith amendment and the yielding back of time on the bill, the committee substitute, as amended, if amended, be agreed to; the bill, as amended, be read a third time, and without further intervening action or debate, the Senate proceed to vote on passage of the bill.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. In my capacity as a Senator from Minnesota, at the request of leadership, I object.

Objection is heard.

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I regret that the Republican leadership has blocked our efforts to have a vote on this amendment. I expect that they will move forward on the immediate passage of the underlying bill. We should also get a vote on hate crimes. It is long overdue. It is clear that the Republican leadership will do anything to stop our hate crimes bill. I don't think it is right to delay consideration of the Senate bill on sex offenders, so the battle on hate crimes must continue. Given today's objections, let's move ahead on S. 1086.

Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. BURNS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

TORT REFORM AND RELATED ISSUES

Mr. BURNS. Mr. President, next week should be a week of looking at our health care system and debating on the direction that I think the policy should go in that area. Not only do we have tort reform that has been suggested by the leader, but also the ability of small business to band together across States to lower the cost of insurance, especially small business owners who have less than 10 employees, and sole proprietors, and even individuals, to band together and do something about lowering their costs of insurance.

Today, I want to open minds and start setting the framework of what this debate is all about that will occur next week.

It is about the unrestrained escalation of jury awards that are driving